

SALMON NATIONAL FOREST HISTORY

LESTER GUTZMAN INTERVIEW

October 23, 1969

Lester Gutzman served on the Salmon National Forest as District Ranger of the Yellowjacket District from November, 1928 until 1944. He was ranger of the Copper Creek District from 1944 until 1957, and the Cobalt District from 1957 until 1959.

This interview took place in Salmon, Idaho, at the home of Lester and Toots Gutzman. Interviewers are Don Ian Smith and Elizabeth M. Smith.

LES GUTZMAN: [on the Wilson Creek fire of 1929] Herb Coles and Wendell Wilkie had just cut a fireline through, down a draw, and didn't notice that the fire was crowning down below, about ninety yards or so, over into the burned area. But they stayed right there, until the fire was right on them. There was a big rock there. As luck would have it, the fire went up one side and they hung onto the opposite side. When the fire came up the other side, the one side had cooled enough that they hung onto that.

INTERVIEWER: *That agrees with the way Wayne O'Connor told it.*

LES GUTZMAN: Wayne was there. The heat was enough that it swelled their eyes shut.

INTERVIEWER: *Wayne said they were kind of blinded from the heat. He said they had a little water with them, to keep something wet over their faces.*

LES GUTZMAN: They had their canteens. I was just about ninety yards from them. I thought they would move. We were perfectly safe, only ninety yards from them. It was too hot to go in that night. We knew just where they were. The next morning we went in, and there were their tracks in the ashes, where they walked up this rock....They were pretty badly blistered. You know how they used to wear those bib overalls? Well, it just singed the whole thing off them....

INTERVIEWER: *You went on that District in 1928?*

LES GUTZMAN: Yes. From November, 1928, until 1944. Sixteen years.

INTERVIEWER: *That fire was a good introduction. Wasn't that one of the biggest fires in the history of this Forest? How would it compare with Corn Creek? [1961]*

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, I think it was a little bigger....One of the biggest fires we ever had. It went all summer. That's when I started smoking. Smoking to keep awake. I had never smoked a cigarette until then. When I sat down I'd go to sleep, so I got a package of cigarettes. And I have smoked ever since.

INTERVIEWER: *That fire was one of the biggest, outside of the 1910 fire.*

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, they had some big ones over on the Nez Perce. In the thirties, that just burned acres and

acres!....

INTERVIEWER: There have been some changes in the names of the Ranger Districts since you started over there. What did they call it: Copper Creek, or Cabin Creek?

LES GUTZMAN: They called it the Yellowjacket when I was there....Then they combined it with the Copper Creek District, and they gave me both of them....I moved out to Copper Creek in 1944....

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Henry Ketchie went to Yellowjacket then....

INTERVIEWER: In the early days of this Forest they had a Cabin Creek District, didn't they?

LES GUTZMAN: That was the original District on Panther Creek. They had one at Leesburg, at the old California Bar, and one at Cabin Creek.

INTERVIEWER: What was the number--all the districts used to have numbers, didn't they?

LES GUTZMAN: Well, they have continued to cut it down. . Yellowjacket used to be District Seven....They have changed since then. Hughes Creek was number Two, Indianola was number Three, Leadore was number Four, and this District [Salmon] was number Five, which it still is.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier, they had ten, in 1916. When C. N. Wood came in on his inspection, he suggested they narrow them down to seven.

LES GUTZMAN: They had seven when I started.

INTERVIEWER: Which one would have been number Six, and One?

LES GUTZMAN: One used to be Indianola. Hughes was always Two.

INTERVIEWER: Then what was Three? There was one at Lemhi for awhile. What would number Six have been?

LES GUTZMAN: That was Leadore....

INTERVIEWER: Often the Reports mentioned the Districts by number, but did not say where they were. They would say: you should combine One and Seven, but not say where they were.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: There were a couple of times we didn't really want to transfer....

LES GUTZMAN: After almost 17 years at Yellowjacket, I was at Copper Creek or the general area of Cobalt quite awhile, then I was at Salmon for a year, and then I quit. Every time I asked to move to a little better station, they gave me that District and the one I had before....When I quit I had three Districts. That was in 1959....

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any other close calls on fires like on the Wilson Creek fire?

LES GUTZMAN: I had one down on the [Bridge?] Creek fire--I guess you'd call it the Grouse Creek fire. It was the same year. I almost got it there.

INTERVIEWER: As far as we can tell from the records, in the whole history of this Forest, there hasn't been anyone burned to death in a fire?

TOOTS GUTZMAN: No. We had a horse burn up in the Bear Creek fire.

LES GUTZMAN: The only reason I took him was that I knew that wherever I took the saddle off, that was home for him. I just threw his saddle in the trail, and went off fighting fire. When I saw the fire coming, I asked the men around, "Have you seen my horse?" and they thought that he went out behind the packstring. So I just picked up my saddle and threw it on a packhorse and we had to leave--the fire was coming right down on us. We got out about a quarter to a half mile where it was safe, and caught up with the packstring--they were all stopped there. I said: "Have you seen my horse?" They said no. I started back but I couldn't because of the fire. The next day I went in and he was right there in the trail where my saddle had been....

INTERVIEWER: Just where is Bear Creek?

LES GUTZMAN: Across the Middle Fork from Camas Creek.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever notice near the mouth of Sheep Creek...what appears to be an old Indian camp spot: tepee rings?

LES GUTZMAN: I never did see any there, but at the mouth of Bacon Creek, up the Middle Fork a ways--six or seven miles--there is a big flat area, and just ring after ring after

ring. I dug in some of them, to see if I could uncover anything, and we found charcoal. They must have lived there for years and years and years.

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Swanson, down at ISU, thinks there were more or less permanent dwellings down there.

LES GUTZMAN: That is what it looked like....Just above there at the mouth of Little Loon Creek, are some of the most perfect Indian writings you ever saw--just rock after rock after rock. Wayne O'Connor has seen them, because he has been there with me....

INTERVIEWER: When you were over there first, there weren't many elk in that country, were there?

LES GUTZMAN: No. The elk have come in in the last 25 years or so. There wasn't an elk on that District when I went over there. The first elk I saw was in the thirties. Later they planted 35 elk around Panther Creek. The others came in from the Idaho Forest side, down Big Creek.

INTERVIEWER: Wayne [O'Connor] said that he never knew of any grizzlies in that country, either.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, I disagree with him. There was one there I know, because I tried to get him. I could tell from his tracks: his claw marks were out five or six inches ahead of his toe marks....That was in Short Creek--coming in from the west side of the Middle Fork. I saw him one day. He was a big one. I took my 270 and went to get him. I never did, but I found lots of his tracks.

INTERVIEWER: That was west of the Middle Fork, though.

LES GUTZMAN: Yes. That's the only one I know of.

INTERVIEWER: No wolves left in there either?

LES GUTZMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Wayne O'Connor thinks he got the last one--walked one down and caught it on the third day.

LES GUTZMAN: That's a good story....Mixing fancy with fact.

INTERVIEWER: He said this happened about 1914 or 1915, when he was 19 years old. He said the ranchers had put up a bounty, and they all paid but Milk Merritt. He wouldn't pay.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: He was killed when we were over there.

INTERVIEWER: He was killed the night that Willard Rood and his wife were having a wedding dance.

LES GUTZMAN: We were at that dance.

INTERVIEWER: The dance was at Forney I guess. According to the story, there were two or three fellows that wanted to kill Milk, and the fact that they were at that dance proved they didn't do it.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, that may be true....He reminded me of a big packrat. He had this big handlebar moustache. His face sloped back from his nose, and when it got to twitching, you'd swear he was a packrat.

INTERVIEWER: According to some accounts, he was quite a horse thief too.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, I bought two horses from him. They sure were good ones....I gave one to Toots when we were married, and I had the other one, and they were two good horses.

INTERVIEWER: I guess he dealt in horses quite a bit, from what they say.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, I sure liked those two....He never did a thing to me. I talked to the old man, and visited with him and all that, but I did hear those stories about him. To look at him, I could believe they were true.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess he met an untimely end over there, with a shotgun. I guess that part was true.

LES GUTZMAN: I saw the bullet holes in the windows the next day. As to who did it, I don't know.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: They did charge Shankle [?] with it.

LES GUTZMAN: Shankle's wife. Well, there were people camped up the creek there--it could have been anybody.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it is hard to say, on something like that, especially such an unpopular character....

LES GUTZMAN: Why, it could have been anybody. I don't know why Shankle would shoot him, or Mrs. Shankle....I knew the Shankles, knew the Shankles boy--the fact is, he lived with us one summer.

INTERVIEWER: When you were on that Wilson Creek fire, there were no roads to that area at all, were there?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, no...and no telephones, and no radio.

INTERVIEWER: What was the deal about having to have a runner to take messages?

LES GUTZMAN: When you wanted to send a message to another [fire] camp, you sent a runner.

INTERVIEWER: Earl Nichols said he started out as a runner.

LES GUTZMAN: That's what he was. He was just a message courier.

INTERVIEWER: We asked him if he used a horse, and he said no, because he went where there were no trails....

LES GUTZMAN: And you would have trouble keeping your horse, too. You'd spend more time hunting your horse than you would [traveling]. Yes, he carried messages from camp to camp.

INTERVIEWER: Quite a difference in fire management then and now. You really didn't have much equipment to fight a fire with, did you?

LES GUTZMAN: Only a hodag and a shovel.

INTERVIEWER: Hodag?

TOOTS GUTZMAN: That's a pulaski.

LES GUTZMAN: We didn't even have pulaskis then. It was just a grubbing hoe. We called them hodags. We got pulaskis after that.

INTERVIEWER: About all you could do was try to contain the fire a little, and try to stop it at more or less natural barriers.

LES GUTZMAN: We tried to pick natural barriers, and let the fire burn out. For backfires, we would go back a mile or two, and hope the fire would burn to that place. Sometimes it would, and sometimes the backfire would burn the other way.

INTERVIEWER: Has that country come back pretty well since that burn [Wilson Creek fire]?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh yes! Lodgepoles so thick over there that you can't get through some places.

INTERVIEWER: Lodgepole always seems to thicken up after a fire.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, those darn cones are so tight that they'll lay on the ground for years and years and years without rotting. When the fire hits them, they pop open. [The fire] pops them open and starts the shoots....

INTERVIEWER: Gene Powers seemed to think that right in Wilson Creek itself, it hasn't stabilized too well since that fire--there are slides there.

LES GUTZMAN: There's slides there, but I think there were slides there before that [fire]....Before the fire even burned through there, you'd go down in there and have to climb over rock slides with your horses. It's worse, of course. There, for a year or two the rocks just really tumbled down.

INTERVIEWER: He was down in there a year ago [1968], and said there were slides, and every year the snow starts the slides again....

When you started [on the District] in 1928, how much help did you have?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, I had three lookouts and [?].....

INTERVIEWER: No assistant ranger or anything?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, no!

INTERVIEWER: What three lookouts did you have over there?

LES GUTZMAN: Red Rock,...Two Point, and Middle Fork Peak.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have telephones when you started?

LES GUTZMAN: Yes. That was the only telephone there was--in the [Ranger] Station. When they sent word back, you had a long ride to get to a telephone....

INTERVIEWER: Actually, you were more interested in maintaining good trails in those days than they are now.

LES GUTZMAN: The only trail there was was down Yellowjacket Creek and down the river....The first job we did was to build a trail on down the river, so you could go down there.

There was no way of getting through the [Bighorn] Craggs at all.

INTERVIEWER: You were there when some of those trails went in there then?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, yes! We built them.

INTERVIEWER: The trail doesn't ^{so} clear down the river yet, does it?

LES GUTZMAN: It goes down to Waterfall Creek. Then it goes up Big Creek, and back up Waterfall and over to the head of Wilson Creek.

INTERVIEWER: Was that pack bridge built when you were there?

LES GUTZMAN: We built that, in '32, or '33 wasn't it?

TOOTS GUTZMAN: You built two pack bridges.

INTERVIEWER: I was thinking of the one just below the Mormon Ranch.

LES GUTZMAN: We built that in '34 or '35. The other is at the mouth of Brushy Creek. And then we built one at Big Creek the next summer. Or was it '33 and '34?....

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Wasn't it later than that, Lester, when we built the one down at Big Creek?

LES GUTZMAN: No, the first year we were married we went down there.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: We stayed in there that whole winter.

LES GUTZMAN: In '33.

INTERVIEWER: Before that, when you wanted to cross the Middle Fork, you just hoped your horse could keep his feet; just hope he was a good swimmer.

LES GUTZMAN: Gosh, we used to swing our packhorses across.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Early in the spring we'd go in. That was the only way to get across....

LES GUTZMAN: It was pretty darn cold. It was a wonder we didn't drown some horses, but we never did....

INTERVIEWER: *Fording one of those rivers when its cold was kind of a tough thing.*

LES GUTZMAN: Or when its high!....I think both of us have had all of that country we wanted. It's one of the most rugged piece of country in the United States.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Well, for recreation, the float trips are a wonderful experience, for people who have never had the opportunity....The thing that irritates me a little bit, with all this "wild rivers" and this "primitive" bit, is that the ordinary person can't afford it. So we're just having a playground, made out of our country, for the wealthy, and this irritates me....

INTERVIEWER: *[In the early days before roads] it wasn't wilderness because people did not depend on roads, and they took horses ANYPLACE. Now that they have built roads, it is wilderness because nobody gets over there [where there are no roads].*

TOOTS GUTZMAN: When we first went over there [Middle Fork], there were several cabins along there. And there were always people all along, in the cabins....

INTERVIEWER: *We wanted to ask you about some of the hermits in that area.*

LES GUTZMAN: I knew old Frank Love....And I could always tell when I was going to meet him. It might be a half hour later, but he'd finally show up, if the wind was blowing in the right direction. That man you could smell half a mile away....

INTERVIEWER: *Where did he live?*

LES GUTZMAN: Well, he had a cave right below the mouth of Camas [Creek]...on the east side, going down. You could see it from the trail. He lived under that rock a couple of years that I know of. Then he had a little cabin up the Middle Fork a little ways. Then he also [?]. That's how he got his groceries....

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Who was that old character--the first trip that I made in--that lived there at Sheep Creek?

LES GUTZMAN: That was old Frank Love....

INTERVIEWER: *What ever became of him, do you know?*

LES GUTZMAN: He finally died in there.

INTERVIEWER: Was he buried over there?

LES GUTZMAN: No. They took him out. I don't know where.

INTERVIEWER: What other hermits did you know?

LES GUTZMAN: Well, old Dave Lewis. You knew of him....Uncle Dave Lewis, Cougar Dave. He was a well known man....He used to invite me in when I was over there. He lived up Big Creek just a little way. He was nice. He had a little ranch at the mouth of Brush Creek.

INTERVIEWER: Parrott was on the west side, wasn't he?

LES GUTZMAN: He had a little cabin up in Nugget Creek.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: When we stopped there he was gone. But he had a garden, and he tanned his own hides.

...
INTERVIEWER: Is Nugget Creek farther up than Nolan [Creek]?

LES GUTZMAN: It is above Stoddard [Creek]...and below Papoose. There are two little creeks in there: Nugget and Cradle Creek....He had ladders to climb up to his place on the bench. He was clean and neat....

TOOTS GUTZMAN: The day we stopped there he had corn drying, and he evidently made his own clothing from deer hides. His place was quite neat....I think just about all he ever bought was probably salt....

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other hermits around there?

LES GUTZMAN: No, there were more closer to Salmon.

INTERVIEWER: One that wasn't really a hermit, because he was so sociable, (talk about the smell), was Gus Peebles. He lived there in the Smith place at the mouth of the Middle Fork. I'd go down there to go fishing, and he would always invite me in to eat. I couldn't make my swallowing muscles work. The steelhead fishermen would catch squawfish, and he'd scrounge these old squawfish, and cook them with cabbage. He carried old sagebrush into his cabin, and he'd break it up in his cabin, and the dirt would come out of it and it just kept getting deeper and deeper. From the door there was a trail to the stove, and a trail to the bed. I didn't believe in lying, you know, but there's a time--and I'd always tell him: "Well, Gus, I just ate."

TOOTS GUTZMAN: When I first went over to Yellowjacket, when we'd go by Henry Currys, at the old Yellowjacket ranch, Henry was an old bachelor, and he'd always run out and want us to eat. Lester would always have some excuse--going in to the Middle Fork we'd just have one day. One time, coming back, it was kind of late. The minute Henry would hear the horses, he'd always be out at the gate. So nothing would do but we had to stop and have dinner. We were going to eat with him that night. Well, I had never been in his cabin. He had all his harnesses, and his saddles, and all his belongings were all in this one room. There was a kind of an old leanto that was his kitchen. So, I thought it was the least I could do would be help him. He was out there busying around. I went out and asked if I could help. Well, no, he didn't need any help. He was going to make some sourdough biscuits. And he had this jug. There was a hole just big enough to get the spoon down in, and the rest was just green!....

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know he was a bachelor. We stopped at his place one time, about 1944 or 1945, and there was a Mrs. Curry.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: He married Pearl Leacock.

INTERVIEWER: We drove over there, in the spring, and she hadn't seen another woman for six months.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: The first few years that I was there, Henry was a bachelor. He used to go up to look at his cattle, and he would get back [to our place] in time for dinner...and if some of the men were still working, well, he'd have to go. He never tied his shoes. The shoestrings were always a dragging. And he'd go shuffling out and visit with the men and then he'd be there for dinner that night. When we were at the Station we could depend on Henry for at least two meals a day.

LES GUTZMAN: He was a good-hearted old soul....
[Of Emmet Reese living in a cave on the Middle Fork]: The cave was so low that he would have to crawl out to stand up. He had everything under there, and lived under that rock just like a coyote. Now he doesn't even speak to me....[If he did, I'd say] "Well, you sure look different than when I saw you under that rock."

INTERVIEWER: He spent several years in the Middle Fork country, I guess. He was telling us that he was down there when Jessie Goodell's brother [Schultz] was killed by lightning. Emmet was packing, and I guess helped bring him out....He packed when he could get a job.... He came from

Kentucky. His first job was herding sheep out in Oregon for awhile, then he came here....

LES GUTZMAN: That was the...last day of January [when I saw him under that rock].

INTERVIEWER: He could tell you some pretty good tales about that country. He knew Parrott pretty well. That wouldn't be too far from Parrot's place, where you saw him.

LES GUTZMAN: He was right across from Parrott. On a low bench down there.

INTERVIEWER: What a place to spend the winter!....Aren't there quite a few old "characters" and others that are buried over in that area? Aren't there some old graves?

LES GUTZMAN: There are quite a few there at the Mormon Ranch, but I couldn't tell you who they were....There's a Moyer over here on Moyer Creek, up on the ridge. He was killed by two outlaws along the Thunder Mountain trail.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: There's a grave over by Middle Fork Peak too.

LES GUTZMAN: Yes, I don't know what killed him. His name was Armstrong, I think. We put up a marker there. Then, there is Sheepherder Gulch up from Forney. That fellow was herding sheep. Sitting under a tree. Killed him, so they named it Sheepherder Gulch....Up Fourth of July Creek over there by Forney. Just under Red Rock lookout. He was herding sheep, and sitting under this tree, and lightning hit the tree....I don't know this man's name. I did know it--found it out and put a marker there.

INTERVIEWER: This indicates apparently they must have been running some sheep there in those days.

LES GUTZMAN: Oh yes! When I first went over there, there were thousands of sheep in that country. Clear back to Middle Fork Peak. All through Yellowjacket.

INTERVIEWER: They drifted in there? Ranchers from around here [Salmon] drifted their sheep out there in the summer?

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Ora Cockrell had a big band of sheep in there.

LES GUTZMAN: Ora Cockrell had a band. Mullen had a band....Mahaffey had a band. Vance had a band.

INTERVIEWER: Would they just start here and drift them over?

LES GUTZMAN: They fed them over there and grazed for awhile and then fed them back.

INTERVIEWER: Which Mahaffey?

LES GUTZMAN: Steve's Dad.

INTERVIEWER: Old Steve?

LES GUTZMAN: Yes. He had a band in there...on Moyer Creek.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned two other sheepmen, besides Ora Cockrell and Steve Mahaffey--

LES GUTZMAN: Jude Wells, and Charlie Vance.

INTERVIEWER: Did they just drift them a few miles a day and keep moving?

LES GUTZMAN: Have you ever been around Sun Valley? Did you notice that dusty sheep drive? That's where they came. They came up through there and down across by Challis and over into that Forney country.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: Lester, whose sheep was it when we were at Cobalt later, and they were shooting them--and the law came out?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, that was Shurtliff, from the Pahsimeroi. He bought Ora Cockrell's band of sheep. They got away from him. [Trespass].

INTERVIEWER: All those sheep are out of there now, aren't they?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, yes! They trucked the last of them out of there with Charlie Vance. I think they probably traded sheep for cows.

INTERVIEWER: There are hardly any cattle over in there now, are there?

LES GUTZMAN: No. They've cut them down since I left.

INTERVIEWER: When would you say the last sheep left?

LES GUTZMAN: About 1946 or so. I couldn't tell for sure. Tobias was in there....

TOOTS GUTZMAN: There at the last they trucked them in, didn't they Lester? There to Musgrove, and there they would unload them and take them out. When they brought them out in the fall, they trucked them out....

INTERVIEWER: Which Gutzman is "Gutzman's Leap" named for?...Up on the Cougar Point road?

LES GUTZMAN: I never heard of it.

INTERVIEWER: It was supposed to be a Gutzman that missed one of those hairpin turns and went straight down to the road again. We didn't know if it was you, or Paul, or who.

LES GUTZMAN: I've done that a time or two. I've never heard that....

INTERVIEWER: We heard about that 15 or 20 years ago.

LES GUTZMAN: Well, we did manage to stay on the road, but we did jump a few feet.

INTERVIEWER: This was supposed to have been one time when you were going to or from a fire, and just missed a couple hairpins and went straight down or straight up....You did have a road all the way to where your Station was?

LES GUTZMAN: It was hardly a road!

INTERVIEWER: But it wasn't built down Panther Creek yet.

LES GUTZMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: When the Rood family was growing up down there, they didn't have a road?

LES GUTZMAN: Just a pack trail. When Toots and I were first married, in 1933, the only way you could get into that country [Yellowjacket] was to go up Morgan Creek and down, to Forney. This old Leesburg road you couldn't drive a cargo over.

INTERVIEWER: Then the people who lived on down Panther Creek didn't have a road.

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, no! From the mouth of Napias Creek down, there wasn't any road. Clear to the mouth.

INTERVIEWER: When did they build the road there?

LES GUTZMAN: About 1934 or '35....And the Williams Creek road about the same time. They built the Williams Creek road and then they went down Panther Creek.

INTERVIEWER: And prior to that, in the early days, anyone going with sleds or wagons, would have gone via Leesburg....So a car could only go by Morgan Creek....When was the Morgan Creek road built?

LES GUTZMAN: That was an old mining road put in there in the early days....

INTERVIEWER: Was Leesburg already a ghost town when you went in to Yellowjacket?

LES GUTZMAN: It was already a ghost town.

INTERVIEWER: Was there quite a community at Forney?

LES GUTZMAN: No, just a few ranchers, and a school.

INTERVIEWER: What about the mine up on Silver Creek: the Rabbit's Foot mine?

LES GUTZMAN: That closed down about the time I went over there....Too bad Fred Ramey's dad isn't alive: Lee Ramey. He could tell you all kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER: We got a little bit from Fred.

LES GUTZMAN: Yes, but Fred would be factual, but Lee would tell you things that would make your hair curl! He told me about the early days, packing the mail into Forney. He said he had a pair of skis, and coming down into Forney, he noticed he was picking up speed. He couldn't figure what was making him pick up so much speed. He looked around and there was a cougar standing right up on the skis behind him! And he said "You know, I went so fast, I burnt those skis off, right behind my feet!"....There used to be a little old cabin up on the hill, right on the summit. We got to talking about that one day, and he said: "You know, I was in that when they first built it, the first winter. A guy took a shot at us, and that bullet went around and around and around, and if the door hadn't been open so the bullet could go out, it would finally have got us."

INTERVIEWER: So that's where Fred [Ramey] gets the twinkle in his eye.

LES GUTZMAN: He would sit and tell stories by the hour. He was the cook for my trail crew, down on the Middle Fork. I

went down one day, and they were supposed to be working, but there wasn't a man, only Lee --he was the cook. I asked: "Where is the crew?" He kind of grinned, and said: "They're hunting a sturgeon, down the creek a ways --down the river." And I said: "You told them a sturgeon story, didn't you!" He said: "Yup, I did, and they swallowed it." And there was my whole crew, running up and down trying to find that sturgeon....Him and Wayne --he just put Wayne to shame....

INTERVIEWER: You had quite a few cattle on your District, didn't you? I remember Bill Wilson telling us that it took quite a few years to find out that wasn't cattle country over there.

LES GUTZMAN: That's right. There used to be lots of [cattle], but there aren't very many there now.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the early cattlemen?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, the Wilsons, the Roods, and there were a whole bunch out toward Challis.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have trouble with trespass horses over there? More horses than their allotment?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh, yes! We always had a battle on that. They would come over there and turn their stock loose, then they would go out for the winter....

INTERVIEWER: Did Mahaffey have cattle over there?

LES GUTZMAN: No cattle, just sheep.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: An Association from here ran cattle over around Cobalt.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, Kester Soule ran cattle over there. And Hodges....

LES GUTZMAN: And Edwards, and Fifes, and Marion Smith, and [?] Cockrell. Quite a bunch of them still run cattle over there.

INTERVIEWER: I know they had a rider...Bally Randolph, was over there around Phelan Creek, riding for that Association. They had a lot of cows over there a few years ago.

LES GUTZMAN: I think they have cut them sixty percent though, now. Maybe fifty percent.

INTERVIEWER: What could you do about trespass horses?

LES GUTZMAN: Oh,...I used to round them up. And then, that bunch that used to be down on the lower Panther Creek, I told them that on April 15, if they didn't have them out of there, I would start shooting. I got orders from the Secretary of Agriculture to do that. I didn't have to shoot very many horses. I think I shot five and that was the end of it....One hundred and fifty head they took out of there. Out of lower Panther Creek, down around Roods. Roods were right at the mouth of Beaver Creek.

INTERVIEWER: *There used to be a school on Beaver Creek.*

LES GUTZMAN: It used to be right at the mouth. Beaver Creek school....Four miles from the mouth of Panther Creek. I'll say one thing for old man Rood. When I told him: "I'm going to round up your horses," he said: "Well, if you can round them up, I'll see that they don't go back up on the hill." I said: "O.K., open up your gates." And we ran in about thirty head of his. He was just as good as his word. He had trucks come in and get them. They didn't go back on the hill!...

INTERVIEWER: *That was quite a job, wasn't it?*

TOOTS GUTZMAN: That was a rough job.

LES GUTZMAN: It's a wonder we didn't break our necks....They were horses that nobody used --they were just out there. A lot of them had never been corraled, and they were old horses then. The people over there were behind it [the removal program]. We were trying to clean them out and get them off. Only had trouble with one man, and that was Andy Anderson, and I wasn't the one that rounded his up.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: He used to be at the Ramshorn.

LES GUTZMAN: He was really mad at me, but it was Henry Ketchie that said: "Come and help me round these horses up." And I had to go. I helped him round the horses up, and then I got the blame for it.

TOOTS GUTZMAN: They put them in the corral at Cobalt....

LES GUTZMAN: Those were packhorses. They were broke horses.

INTERVIEWER: *Thank you both for sharing memories of your years with the Salmon National Forest.*

End of interview.